Periodic Vendors

Selling goods at periodic markets provides some farm households with a supplementary income. Both men and women do this. Participation in the market is sporadic for many, however, since vendors may have goods to sell only at certain times or seasons. Thus, this kind of marketing is frequently opportunistic. Other vendors, working an itinerant circuit or having the opportunity to visit wholesalers regularly in el-Obeid, are found in the markets week after week. Something of the diversity of periodic vendors will be made clearer by describing several examples.

Abu-Haraz market - twenty year-old woman selling handmade brooms

This woman lives with her parents and her husband in a village that is one-half hour away by truck from Abu Haraz. They are farmers. She belongs to the dominant tribe of the area, the Bideiriya. The only commodity that she is selling is straw brooms made from a species of grass that grows plentifully one-half hour from her village. She and her female relatives harvested the grass and tied it into loose bundles. The bundles are held in the hand for sweeping. She brought fifty brooms and is selling them for 0.050 each. She came to Abu Haraz by a truck from her village. The charge was 0.500 for herself as a rider while her goods were hauled free of charge. This is only the third time she has been to this market in the past year.

el-Geifil market - sixty year-old man selling sesame oil

This man is a member of the dominant Jawama'a Tribe. He is a prosperous farmer and operates an oil press in el-Geifil. He attends the market every Sunday during the season (Nov.-Apr.) to sell his oil. He buys sesame from farmers at 1.000/mid (Jan., 1982), and each mid produces about one rootl of oil and 5 rootls of umbaaz (sesame cake). The umbaaz is given to the camel that turns the oil press and any surplus is sold for 0.050/rootl. He has brought 46 rootls of sesame oil to the market on this day and he is selling it at 0.650/rootl. This is the same price that oil is selling for in el-Obeid. The seller explains that he can demand this high price in el-Geifil market because he has no competition. At el-Karra market--one hour by donkey to the north of el-Geifil--there is more competition and the price is lower (0.600/rootl); however, the volume of sales is much more. This man also sells oil in the el-Karra market.

65 The majority of the informants we talked to indicated their earnings at the periodic market would go directly to the family budget. The vendor often uses his or her earnings immediately to buy household needs while still at the market.

66 Our impression is that young girls are socialized earlier into this practice than young boys. Often they are seen selling prepared foods that have been made in their homes. Boys take up commercial roles in adolescence as a means of earning spending money and to begin saving for marriage.

67 The truck carried crops to be sold at the government market and empty barrels for filling with water.

68 The camel eats about ten rootls of sesame cake per day.